

NEWS RELEASE

**INDIANA
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**



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Joseph E. Kernan, Governor
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*** Public Notice ***

Workers at Bluffton's KITCO receive federal aid

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – The Indiana Department of Workforce Development announced today that the U.S. Department of Labor has ruled that former employees of Bluffton's KITCO, Division of Specialty Elastomers Technologies, Inc. have qualified for federal Trade Adjustment Assistance.

Administered at the state level by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is made available to workers who are displaced due to foreign imports or shifts in production out of the country. The Wells County plant manufactured molded rubber products used in automobiles.

In order for dislocated workers to be eligible for TAA benefits, a company executive, union representative or three former employees must file a petition with U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and it must be approved before benefits can be released. A petition was filed by the Metal Processors union on July 2, 2004, on behalf of the workers.

Upon its completion, the USDOL investigation found that a significant number of KITCO's customers increased their reliance on imported molded rubber products while decreasing their purchases from the company. With the ruling, any employee who was totally or partially separated from employment on or after June 30, 2003 through two years from the date of certification is eligible to apply for adjustment assistance.

The TAA program provides a variety of benefits and services to help unemployed workers prepare for and obtain suitable employment. Workers may be eligible for a variety of re-employment services, job search and relocation allowances and training. In addition, weekly trade re-adjustment allowances may be payable to eligible workers following the exhaustion of unemployment insurance benefits.

Additionally, the USDOL issued a certification for Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance for separated older workers at KITCO. It was found that a significant number of workers at the company age 50 or over possess skills that are not easily transferable and that competitive conditions within the industry are adverse. Older workers may choose between regular TAA benefits, or a wage subsidy of 50 percent of the difference between their new salary and old salary, up to \$10,000.

Information sessions for workers on how to apply for TAA and Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance are currently being planned and will be announced at a later date. Eligible parties may also contact Joe Mercheck or Janice Silkworth at the Fort Wayne WorkOne Center at 260/ 745-3555, (ext. 361 or ext. 362) or visit any WorkOne Center for more information.

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